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CHEERINESS



GIFT OF
Class of 1900



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CHEERINESS

[1]

CHEERINESS

By

W. R. RUTHERFORD

THESE
 THÈSE

NEW YORK
DODGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
220 EAST 23D STREET

Class of 1900

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A. M. ROBERTSON**

TO THE
ASSOCIATION

BJ 1477

R8

1906

MAIN

***"Have you any cheering greeting?
Tell it out to-day;
While you wait, the friend and message
May have gone away."***

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CHEERINESS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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TO THE
ABSTRACT

CHEERINESS

“WHAT a beautiful day!” How often we hear it said, and how true it is. And is it not always so over the greater part of the world? Where the climate seems to us of this zone to be unpropitious or extreme, nature has kindly tempered conditions so that man does not find those climates any more uncomfortable than we find ours. The Laplander and the Eskimo are fed and clothed in accordance with their requirements, while the South Sea Islander and the African native are fed and unclothed as is comfortable in their regions of eternal summer.

In our temperate zone have we not more days of sunshine than rain and cloud? Does not the moon, do not the stars, show light on more nights than are cloudy or moonless? Then why should we not often remark, What a fine day? Why not often help one another to note the fact of the beautiful weather?

If you greet a man with "Isn't it sweltering to-day?" ten chances to one he will answer, "Yes; it's roasting," or something to that effect; while if you pleasantly remark, "Fine day," he will reply "Delightful." What is the philosophy of this? Is it that the same man really feels the day different as he meets a growler or a cheery optimist? Yes, and no. He is more or less affected in his physical feeling by his mental attitude, of course; but, on the other hand, he expresses in his reply that inborn longing of every human being, if not of every rational creature, for sympathy, that instinctive desire to be in accord with one's surroundings.

This being so, how great becomes the responsibility of every person who seeks the welfare and not the discomfort of his fellows, to strive by every salutation to make his neighbor feel better. Then let us comment upon the beautiful weather every day we have a shadow of excuse for doing so; and if any stray day of another kind chances to come along let us look for some pleasant thought to introduce conversation or to express the

passing greeting rather than make one another feel more of discomfort than need be.

And broadening our outlook beyond the mere passing salutation, or even the words of our lips alone, shall we not strive more earnestly to let more of sunshine into our brothers' and sisters' lives day by day? To-day is ours. Of to-morrow we can say only that it may be ours. "Oh, the good we all may do while the days are going by!" As Nixon Waterman beautifully expresses it:

We shall do so much in the years to come,
But what have we done to-day?

We shall give our gold in a princely sum,
But what did we give to-day?

We shall lift the heart and dry the tear,
We shall plant a hope in the place of fear,
We shall speak the words of love and cheer,
But what did we speak to-day?

We shall be so kind in the afterwhile,
But what have we been to-day?
We shall bring to each lonely life a smile,
But what have we brought to-day?

We shall give to truth a grander birth,
And to steadfast faith a deeper worth,
We shall feed the hungering souls of earth;
But whom have we fed to-day?

We shall reap such joys in the by and by,
But what have we sown to-day?
We shall build us mansions in the sky,
But what have we built to-day?
'Tis sweet in idle dreams to bask,
But here and now do we do our task?
Yes, this is the thing our souls must ask—
“What have we done to-day?”

THE CONSTANT MAN

THE CONSTANT MAN

THERE is honor given to the successful man, and there is credit to the one who tries but fails, and yet tries again. But there is another man who deserves high praise also—the one, namely, who fixes his eye on a certain goal, and steadfastly pursues his way toward that mark, regardless alike of success or failure. Such a man is not over-elated when he succeeds, his head is not turned, he does not step aside to enjoy the fruits of conquest; nor, on the other hand, when disaster overtakes him, and the way seems hedged up, does he sit down and wring his hands in despair, or tamely yield to circumstances, but makes the obstacles stepping-stones, and climbs over them to higher ground.

This is the man who goes steadily onward, undaunted by untoward fate, and unseduced by fortune's allure-

ments. He is the type of constancy. He forms his purpose to attain the end before him, the ideal that he seeks, and then follows the path that leads to that goal, unswerving, unaffected by the heights he has to climb, by the pitfalls that lie about his feet—but are not for such as he—undaunted by the troubles or the opposing forces that he encounters. He gains strength by every contest, wisdom from every experience, and goes forward undismayed, day by day nearing the heights he would attain—though, if he be a true man, never reaching his ideal. (Pity the man who does!)

How may one attain to this high serenity, this calm, imperturbable constancy of purpose, this tenacity and patience of accomplishment? There is no royal road, only the old path of training, or patient plodding, of earnest endeavor and fixed determination. No man can fix the fate that will come to him; every man may fix the spirit and temper of mind in which he shall encounter whatever fate befall him. As Priscilla Leonard, in the *Outlook*, recently wrote:

No man can choose what coming hours may bring
To him of need, of joy, of suffering;
But what his soul shall bring unto each hour
To meet its challenge—this is in his power.

The world respects a man who thus pursues his aim steadily, regarding neither success nor failure, going on from one duty to the next, from one day's achievement, however slight, or however great, to the tasks of the next morning. Honor to him, the steady-going man! the man of constant spirit, of fixity of purpose, of earnestness unwavering! Such as he are needed in this world, where there is too much of impetuosity, of fickleness, of going "by fits and starts." Like the constant dropping that wears away the stone, it is the constant man who accomplishes the great works of the world, the enduring structures of men's hands and men's minds. His example is not exciting, but better, it is encouraging; it helps to achieve undertakings, it serves a useful end, and conduces to make life better.

I do not know the author of the following lines, which have been handed to me, but they express very aptly the thought of part of this article:

THE INEVITABLE

I like the man who faces what he must,
 With step triumphant and a heart of cheer;
 Who fights the daily battle without fear;
Sees his hopes fail, yet keeps unfaltering trust
That God is God: that somehow, true and just,
 His plans work out for mortals. Not a tear
 Is shed when fortune, which the world holds dear,
Falls from his grasp. Better with love a crust
 Than living in dishonor; envies not,
Nor loses faith in man, but does his best,
 Nor ever murmurs at his humbler lot,
But with a smile and words of hope gives zest
To every toiler. He alone is great
Who by a life heroic conquers fate.

DUTY OF HEALTH

DUTY OF HEALTH

IT is a commonplace to say that a man has a duty of being well, because happiness and the best service of life is not possible otherwise. I was reading, a few days ago, an editorial in an Eastern weekly which suggested this line of thought. It is a fact to which we must submit, that a man's mental and spiritual state is strongly colored by his physical condition. This fact is thus put by Sydney Smith in his own inimitable fashion:

“Happiness is not impossible without health, but it is of only difficult attainment. I do not mean by health merely an absence of dangerous complaints, but that the body should be in perfect tune, full of vigor and alacrity. The longer I live the more I am convinced that the apothecary is of more importance than Seneca, and that half the unhappiness of the world proceeds from little stoppages, from a duct choked up, from

food pressing in the wrong place, from a vexed duodenum, or an agitated pylorus. The deception, as practiced upon human creatures, is curious and entertaining. My friend sups late; he eats some strong soup, then a lobster, then some tart, and he dilutes these excellent varieties with wine. The next day I call upon him. He is going to sell his house in London and retire into the country. He is alarmed for his eldest daughter's health. His expenses are heavily increasing, and nothing but a timely retreat can save him from ruin. All this is lobster, and when over-excited nature has had time to manage this testaceous encumbrance the daughter recovers, the finances are in good order, and every rural idea excluded from his mind. In the same manner old friendships are destroyed by toasted cheese, and hard, salted meat has led to suicide."

The witty canon here seeks to emphasize the fact that an unhealthy condition of body, however caused, produces a disastrous effect upon the mind and the

whole spirit, rendering impossible for the time being the highest living on any plane.

Fortunately, however, for humanity, good health is possible for the great majority of men and women, if they will but follow certain simple and easily applied rules, which will, even in the case of those suffering from serious physical affliction, make some degree of health and happiness possible. These rules are not new, but they need and bear emphasizing. They are:

First, preserve a bright, cheerful, hopeful outlook upon the world of men and things. There is no tonic in the world, both for yourself and those about you, like a cheerful spirit.

Second, live as naturally as you can, by eating wholesome food and living much in the open air. Happily, he is very peculiarly situated who cannot get plenty of God's sunshine, fresh air, pure water and plain, good food, and take the exercise of walking—one of the best.

Third, avoid nostrums; avoid them as you would

the devil, for the devil of disease and ruin is in most of them. Of course, there are some exceptions. Some patent medicines are good and useful; but in general, according to the authority of the whole medical profession and the testimony of common sense, they are the prolific cause of much misery and ill-health. These three rules are not hard to keep, and certainly they will help a man to be healthful and happy, and to add to the happiness and usefulness of others also, and thus discharge a duty he owes to himself, his family, the community, and the God who made him.

SEEDS BY THE WAYSIDE

SEEDS BY THE WAYSIDE

ONE of the most beautiful little gems of poetic thought along the line of helpfulness in the seemingly trivial affairs along the pathway of every-day life is this, by D. G. Bickers, printed in "The Lifeboat," an illustrated monthly journal, devoted, according to the title page, to "charitable, philanthropic, health and soul-saving work," and published in Chicago. It is entitled "Little Kindnesses":

You gave on the way a pleasant smile,
And thought no more about it;
It cheered a life that was sad the while,
That might have been wrecked without it.
And so for the smile and fruitage fair
You'll reap a crown some time—somewhere.

You spoke one day a cheering word,
And passed to other duties;
It warmed a heart, new promise stirred,
And painted a life with beauties.
And so for the word and its silent prayer
You'll reap a palm some time—somewhere.

You lent a hand to a fallen one,
A life in kindness given ;
It saved a soul when help was none,
And won a heart for heaven ;
And so for the help you proffered there
You'll reap a joy some time—somewhere.

It is such seeds scattered by the wayside that often spring up to bear fruit of happy memories in after days, and often, too, bring returns of kind deeds. It is only such things which one can really call one's own acquisitions—for wealth and property can be held only for a few years at longest and then must be left behind. But one's own character, developed by such training to deeds of sympathy and human kindness to one's fellow toilers, remains with its possessor even beyond the bounds of this life. As expressed in a sentence from the conclusion of a eulogy on Peter Cooper, "All you can hold in your cold, dead hand is what you have given away."

The development of a disposition and character of

helpfulness is not a matter of accident. It requires a fixed and steady purpose to see and seize opportunities. Like everything else worth accomplishing, it demands constant application. Samuel Smiles, in his great book on "Self Help," says: "Accident does very little toward the production of any great result in life. Though sometimes what is called 'a happy hit' may be made by a bold venture, the common highway of steady industry and application is the only safe road to travel." And it is the only road that leads to the rounding out of a beautiful character that shall be made a source of helpfulness to those around. One must keep the eyes open for the chances of the kindly deed, the encouraging word, the appreciative look, which will bring an extra ray of sunshine into the heart of the friend or the stranger, and thus tend to make the world a little better for one's having lived in it.

THE SECRET OF CONTENT

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THE SECRET OF CONTENT

THE true and only source of contentment in life is to be found not in outward circumstances, but in the heart; if we cannot find it there, in ourselves, it is useless to expect to obtain it elsewhere. Nor is it wise to look always too far ahead. To be sure, it is sometimes a staying thought in the midst of trial and difficulty that in the long run we believe that right will triumph, and all will be well; but sometimes it is better to regard simply the present hour, to take a short view of life, and calm our troubled spirits with the assurance that all is well for the present, at least; steadily maintaining this attitude from hour to hour, we find the days pass by, one by one, in calmness and peace.

A writer in the *Brown Book*, of Boston, gives some very good counsel along this line, under the name of "Morning Thoughts."

“To-morrow is only a stranger; when he is to-day, consider how you shall entertain him. Go forth this day with the smallest expectations, but with the largest patience; with a keen relish for and appreciation of everything beautiful, great and good, but with a temper so genial that the friction of the world shall not bear upon your sensibilities. Keep yourself from the fatal malady of bad humor—from grumbling, from little irritations, from rudeness.”

It requires watchfulness to follow out this plan, as it does to pursue any other course of action that leads to useful achievement. One has to keep a guard upon one's acts and words, and even thoughts, to be able to preserve a care-free, happy, contented spirit. And of much assistance along this line is the practice of looking for the beautiful, the pleasing, the good, cherishing and appreciating all that tends to make us happier and better.

Starting out in the day with this purpose in view, and striving to keep it constantly before us as the day

progresses, we can establish a habit of cheerfulness that will enable us to pass over little worries or annoyances which otherwise would fret and disturb, but which now make scarcely a ripple on the calm surface of our contentment.

This habit of cheerfulness counts for far more than any quantity or even quality of worldly possessions for the happiness of the possessor. Many a man and woman who owns millions is less contented than the so-called poor day laborer or washerwoman, who goes to the daily labor with a contented mind, and thus enjoys what the wise man called a continual feast. Not what we possess, but how we possess and how we regard our possessions, be they little or much; not our surroundings without, but our feelings within; not our physical condition, but our mental attitude and our spiritual frame—this is the fertile soil that lies at the root of the beautiful “heart’s-ease” plant of contentment.

APPRECIATE THE PRESENT .

APPRECIATE THE PRESENT

WE live in the here and now. Some people live largely in the past; they are ever turning their thoughts back to past experiences, of sorrow, or of delight, maybe with regret, possibly with gladness. Then again, many people live largely in the future; they act out the doctrine uttered by Pope, that "man never is, but always to be, blest." They think of what they see in the future, or what they would like to see, or perhaps what they dread to see, and so render themselves unduly unpractical or needlessly fearful.

And yet all of us are concerned more with the here and the now than with the remote in either time or place or circumstances. We ought to make the most and the best of the present, with its opportunities, just where our lot is cast. In this way, if the past has been

dark, we have the better chance to make up for it ; or if it has been brighter than our present lot, we do not make things worse by needless comparisons which only emphasize the gloom of the clouds which may now enshroud our lives. And looking the other way, if the future holds in store for us some grief or suffering or loss, we shall be the better able to endure it, for joy gives strength; while if it is teeming with glad experience for our coming days, our hearts will be the more in tune to enjoy it, and there will be no fear of a hurtful reaction.

It was a wise man said, "There is a time to weep and a time to laugh." Laughter, merriment, has as much place and right in our lives as sorrow; nay, it has more! Margaret E. Sangster, who has for a generation been cheering the hearts and lives of men, women and children by her beautiful, helpful thoughts, says: "Looking over our life's story, who does not realize that the merry times are the longer and more frequent times, that the griefs are now and then, and

the joys are every day and all day? Gaiety of mood, readiness to be amused and to find real pleasure in little things, are much more praiseworthy than a gloom which is religion's counterfeit, not the true coin current of piety.

"Every home," continues this writer, "should have its wholesome fund of little jests, familiar anecdotes, and sweet traditions. That is the most charming home for children or grown folks in which there is plenty of fun. If you or I have been tempted to forego fun, and frown upon the genial mirth that helps us in the day's work, we may as well summon our resolution and resist that demon from below. The fun is to be had for the making, and the home and all concerned will be better and happier for it."

The memory of a childhood of pure fun and wholesome frolic in the home and with the home folk is a precious legacy that will serve to brighten many an hour in later life, and may be the guard from gnawing gloom or fretful worry. Make the most of the present

and the place you are in ; it is possibly as good as you have ever had or ever will find, for a good deal of one's enjoyment of life consists in the spirit in which he meets its experiences.

LOOK FOR THE BEST

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LOOK FOR THE BEST

“**I**F anyone should give me a dish of sand,” said Oliver Wendell Holmes, “and say there were particles of iron in it, I might look with my eyes for them, and search for them with my clumsy fingers, and be unable to find them; but let me take a magnet and sweep it, and how it would draw to itself the most invisible particles by the power of attraction! The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find in every hour some heavenly blessing; only the iron in God’s sand is gold.”

How truly the genial Holmes has described the secret of finding in every-day life abundant cause for gladness. It is the spirit in which one views life that makes the outlook pleasant or the reverse. With the

heart ready to receive and appreciate brightness and joyous circumstances, the eyes are open to see all there is of such in the daily pathway.

The spirit that hopes for the best is often best prepared for the worst, should that worst befall, and is most apt to bear manfully whatever happens. The buoyancy of hopefulness is the best antidote to disappointment, and most thoroughly fits one to appreciate all that happens in the day to cause joy and thankfulness.

It is true that many a day brings some things that are by no means joyful; there are troubles, disasters, sorrows, heart-breaks, but still the hopeful heart is best able to bear up under these trials, and, toiling on, will see the reward of conquest achieved over all that is now so hard to endure. Gerald Massey, a British poet, wrote many beautiful poems, each filled with optimism and hopefulness. The following is a sample of his expression of a cheerful spirit. The little gem, which has been set to music, deserves a reading from all:

Oh, never sit down and say
There's nothing left but sorrow !
We walk the wilderness to-day,
The promised land to-morrow.

And though age wearies by the way,
And hearts break in the furrow,
We'll sow the golden grain to-day,
And harvest comes to-morrow.

Build up heroic lives, and all
Be like a sheathen sabre,
Ready to flash out at God's call,
O chivalry of labor !

Triumph and toil are twins ; and aye
Joy stems the cloud of sorrow ;
And 'tis the martyrdom to-day
Brings victory to-morrow.

We need such reminders frequently repeated to help us to preserve that atmosphere of serenity about us that will make our lives immune against the petty annoyances of daily routine and daily toil.

THE CRITIC AS A HELPER

THE CRITIC AS HELPER

A WISE man, someone has said, will turn adverse criticism and malicious attacks to good account. He will carefully consider whether there may not be in him some weakness or fault which he never discovered, but which was all the while plain to the eye of his enemy. Men often can profit more by the attacks of foes than by the kindness of friends.

In the strife of political life no little weakness in the character of any man who aspires to public place can pass unnoticed by the critical scrutiny of his opponents. What a fine chance is thus afforded to every public man to know just how bad he is in the eyes of the world! and so he gains, if he will, an exact knowledge of all the faults he needs to correct as well as those he doesn't—not possessing them.

But this same principle has a much wider application than in the political realm alone, wide as that is. In

daily life a man has much to learn from those who are not his friends. His business or professional rivals may frequently let fall some remark that can serve as a real help and benefit to him, if he will only make the right use of it. He may discover some unsuspected weak spot, some place where he could be more effective, and thus he is under heavy obligation to those whom he would least expect to desire to help him.

Broadening out the thought still farther, we may note the fact that the seemingly untoward things of life, the difficulties, the disappointments, even the apparent disasters, may prove to be the very best things that could happen to us. "We are all," says some writer, "dissatisfied. The only difference is that some of us sit down in the squalor of our dissatisfaction, while others make a ladder of it." We cannot prevent the birds of sadness from flying over our heads, as the proverb says, but we may prevent them from stopping to build their nests there; and as with disappointment and sadness, so with opposition, fault-finding, criticism,

even calumny, it rests with ourselves very largely to decide whether these things are to trouble and depress us, or whether we shall look on the other side of the cloud and see the bright lining, shall read between the lines of the criticism (that may be mainly unjust) and discover the truth that gives occasion to the hard judgment, thus becoming able to correct our conduct, and having to thank even an unfriendly critic for the opportunity of self-improvement.

Cicero said that it is the characteristic of folly to discern the faults of others and to forget one's own. The wise man may therefore be indebted to the fool for the discovery of some faults he has overlooked in his own character. Beaconsfield declared that it is much easier to be critical than to be correct, and who has not found it so? But it is the part of wisdom to strive to find the points of excellence in another, for "if you wish that your own merit should be recognized, recognize the merits of others." And this is pleasanter business than fault-finding.

A HELPFUL MOTTO

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A HELPFUL MOTTO

A SIMPLE motto is often more helpful than an elaborate creed, and such it seems to me is the following by Rev. William E. Gannett:

A task to do,
And a clear inside;
A friend to help,
And the sunny side.

Certainly no moral person can be content who has not a task to do. Idleness is a great curse. When one's thoughts and energies are not made to expend themselves upon some outside interest the mind and heart will turn inward and become self-consuming, and someone says "There is no poison like an ingrowing soul," which consumes itself in fret, worry, lamenting, or remorse.

Worry kills more people than work; better to wear out than to rust out. Tennyson, in his "Ulysses," expresses the same abhorrence of being compelled "not to shine in use." All human experience goes to indorse the maxim that would bid us ever have a task to do.

"A clear inside" may be, and should be, both physical and moral. Disease is a poor concomitant to cheerfulness, and a poor stepping-stone to success; not that a person cannot maintain a cheerful disposition in spite of a sickly constitution, or make a brilliant success of life notwithstanding the heavy handicap of ill health; but the sound body is essential to the best development of the sound mind. Hence the advisability of shunning all habits that tend to make the body in any part less sound, in any organ less efficient, than it might be.

And what applies to the clearness of the inside physically, applies with even greater force, if that can be, to its clearness mentally and morally. Ignorance and vice are implacable foes to real cheerfulness and genuine happiness.



He who would have friends must show himself friendly. Who would not have friends must be of a warped or evil nature, shunning the light of companionship, the gleam of recognition and appreciation in the eyes of friends, because of evil ways that love to shrink into the darkness. But every naturally-disposed man and woman desires and enjoys friendship. And what a selfish thing it would be to expect others to be friendly with one who would not put himself out of the way, or one who would not exert herself gladly, to be on friendly terms with others.

As for "the sunny side," anyone who did not believe in that would scarcely be reading this article, so it appeals to every reader. How often you and I have proved the worth, the advantage, the helpfulness to ourselves and to others, of looking on the sunny side of even the darkest clouds.

OPTIMISM, NATURAL AND CULTIVATED

OPTIMISM, NATURAL AND CULTIVATED

THE value to the world of sunshine is inestimable. So is that of cheerfulness of spirit, the sunshine of the moral world. This cheerfulness may be a matter of temperament, or of philosophy; either kind is good.

It is well to be cheerful of disposition, to wear a bright face, to speak in a happy tone, to be lively in action—it “doeth good like a medicine,” is a tonic to others as well as a benefit to one’s self. It is as infectious as disease, encouraging good spirits in those about one, as well as stimulating healthy views of life in one’s own mind.

Such a person, when troubles would press him down, rebounds. So soon as the immediate burden is removed his buoyant step springs lightly again along life’s pathway. He rises superior to the ills and woes he encounters. His head is above the clouds. His natural gaiety

keeps him from sinking beneath the waves of a tide of adversity.

This optimistic temperament is largely a matter of a healthy constitution. It is a happy fortune for its owner to possess, and it is cheering to those around him. It has a great and constant value in the moral world, and even in the physical, and deserves to be rated high in the market of useful qualities.

But there is another kind of optimism, which may pass current for even higher worth, when we appreciate its usefulness. It is that of the person who is not possessed of a joyous temperament, who maybe is not blessed with health, who perchance finds his way hedged about with difficulties that perplex and harass, whose lot perhaps is cast in the midst of misfortune, of loss, of suffering, of disappointment, of bereavement. Yet, withal, he maintains a steady faith in God and goodness, a persistent trust in the final triumph of right, a never-failing courage in the midst of life's battles, a constant hope and confidence that all is well



though the manner of its outworking may be unperceived. In storm he ever turns his face upward to the skies, where he knows the sun shines, and though the long night be thick with darkness, he scans the horizon in eager gaze and not with despair for the gleam of the dawning light.

This is the true optimist. What he has of cheerfulness he has won by stern fighting with the ills of life. His eyes are not shut to the griefs and troubles around him. He has faced the difficulties, the disappointments, the sorrows of the human lot, and though the lines are not fallen unto him in pleasant places, yet still he trusts "that somehow good shall be the final goal of ill."

Even in the failures and sins that seem to thwart all righteousness he finds room for pity, for penitence, for pardon—those softening emotions that make the heart tender and prove the worth of goodness. He sees even the wrath of man made to praise God. In the presence of the mysteries of life he realizes the omnipresence and omnipotence of God. His trust in the eternal veri-

ties becomes rooted and grounded in hope, and he finds bright promise both of the life that now is and of that which is to come. And surely the optimist is right.

“Since right is right, if God is God,
And right the day must win,
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.”

If “God’s in His heaven,” then he who fully believes that, and who puts himself into right relations with the All-seeing Father, while he may not see how all things are going to work together for his good, and while he certainly will not understand all mysteries and all knowledge, nevertheless trusts and is not afraid, for he feels not only that “all’s right with the world” at large, but also that to him individually “no harm can come on ocean or on shore.”

This is the victory that overcomes the world, even the faith of the genuine optimist. By sheer force of true Christian philosophy he takes the only view possible in reason to the believer in an over-ruling Providence.

LIFE'S LOOM

LIFE'S LOOM

OUR life is made up of days and the deeds we put into them. The days are the warp and the deeds the woof of life. Another web has been woven by the swiftly passing shuttles of time, and we look back upon the completed year. In and out have the threads of action been flying through the days, alternating between sunshine and shadow. Well for us if the Master of all good workmen has been able to look with approval upon our endeavor. Not upon our achievement, for the best endeavor all too often falls far short of accomplishment; but the will to do, and the effort to be the best we can, is what is regarded.

It may be that our own estimate of our actions is far from correct. On the one hand, it may have been too roseate and self-congratulatory. Or, on the other, possibly we have been unduly cast down and filled with self-reproach. We may have "builded better than we

knew." The true state of our conduct is not always apparent to our own eyes.

In a discourse quoted in the *Sunshine Bulletin*, Rev. Donald Sage Mackay, D.D., of New York, refers to the familiar lines entitled "The English Tapestry Weavers," written by an American after visiting their factories in England.

In these works, as is known to those who have seen or read about them, the pattern hangs overhead, above the weaver, while he himself works always on the wrong side of the web, never seeing the worked-out pattern until the piece is finished.

Let us learn a New Year's lesson (no better lesson can be)

From the ways of the tapestry weavers on the other side of the sea.

Above their head the pattern hangs, they study it with care,

And as to and fro the shuttle leaps, their eyes are fastened there.

They tell this curious thing, besides, of the patient,
plodding weaver,
He works on the wrong side evermore, but works for
the right side ever.

It is only when the weaving stops, and the web is loosed
and turned,
That he sees his real handiwork, and his marvelous skill
is learned.

The years of men are the looms of God, let down from
the place of the sun,
Where one and all are weaving till the mystic web is
done.

Weaving blindly, but weaving surely, each for himself
his fate,
We may not see how the right side looks; we can only
weave and wait.

But looking above for the pattern, no weaver hath need
to fear;
Only let him look clear into heaven, the perfect pattern
is there.

If he keeps the face of the Savior forever and always
in sight,
His toil shall be rich with blessing, and his weaving is
sure to be right.

And when his task is ended, and the web is turned and shown,
He shall hear the voice of the Master exclaiming to him,
“Well done.”

Life, we are told, is sacred because it is the arena in which character is developed. “We are placed here to work out a personal character which shall endure the shock of ages.” Accepting this, we see our lives become a part of a great plan, “the unfolding of a purpose whose motive is love, and whose thought is immortal.” The trials, the defeats, the disappointments, the temptations, the sorrows no less than the joys, the satisfactions, the pleasures, the triumphs, have been merely the tools placed in our hands “to chisel out the finer lines of a deathless character.”

The past may have contained many things that seemed dark and mysterious to us, even after months, it may be, have rolled by. Nevertheless, at the last, our life will have amounted to something when out of every trial and every sorrow we emerge with purer, stronger,

truer characters. Then we shall see, when the web is turned, that every dark thread had its place in the infinite plan, and the right side will be bright. May we ever work for that side, watching the pattern and copying it as nearly as may be.

HAPPINESS OF AGE

of childhood to be the sunniest part of life. But truly, having passed the half-century limit, I would no sooner go back to that charming period than would the college senior like to be put back into the freshman class. Though my childhood and youth were very happy ones, and often it is pleasant to review my delightful past in memory, still I think mature years are richer and fuller of peace and pleasure in living than immature ones can possibly be. For one thing, we have learned how to live; have, in a measure, disciplined ourselves to bear the disappointments, bereavements, trials, which must come to all; have learned that these things must needs be. We see others worse off than ourselves, and feel obliged to stifle our griefs from respect to their 'heavier woe.' We learn to weigh circumstances and to know better what is good for us, to live one day at a time; to know where our place in the world is; what our work is; and that to do our best right where we are is all that God requires of us. We can see how even our mistakes have done us good. A thousand matters

of interest claim our attention which in youth possessed no attraction. Having seen the growth of scores of babes, through childhood and youth into manhood and womanhood, we gain a prophetic insight which enhances the study of human nature a hundredfold.

“Then we know our time is growing short, and whose home seemeth not dearer in the prospect of soon leaving it even for a better?”

Such an attitude toward advancing age ought to make the aging feel content and pleased with their condition, and it ought to make those of us who are young look without dread at the thought of growing old. The possibility of growing old beautifully and gracefully, the example of those who have done so, perhaps in our own homes, should stimulate us to live with regard to the future, so that when the hair is whitening and the physical powers are gradually lessening, we may have the companionship of pleasant memories, of days and years well spent, of wisdom gained through experience not full of bitterness, and of a consciousness

of growth into a better and deeper understanding of life and its various problems.

This view seems to be the most reasonable one. And it certainly is full of comfort for the old, and of encouragement for the middle-aged and young.

GROWING OLD BEAUTIFULLY

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GROWING OLD BEAUTIFULLY

“YOU haven’t changed a bit!” How often the words are said by one friend to another.

What is the secret of it? One woman, to whom such a greeting was given by one who had not seen her for years, and who appeared to half wonder and half envy at the perennial freshness of youth in her friend’s countenance, saying she looked as young as ten years before, replied: “Young?” as if reflecting upon the word for the first time. “Bless you! I haven’t had time to grow old; I have been too busy even to think about it.” There is the recipe; abundance to do, to keep one profitably busy, yet without worry. In the case of the woman mentioned, her heart and hands had been full; all the comfort and brightness that came into the sick-room of an invalid was due to her; a sister’s orphan children had been left to her care, and with the task of managing her limited income so as to provide for all, her ingenuity had been taxed. Her

heart had retained its warmth and interest in life because of her having mothered the flock. Such a life of busy helpfulness may add years, but they bring few of the signs of age, so long as the burdens are cheerfully, uncomplainingly borne. Old age may be, and ought to be, the happiest time of life; and if the happiest, why should not the greeting, "You look as young as you did when I saw you last, ten years ago," be a frequent salutation?

Another secret of growing old beautifully is to so live as to keep health. Yes, it is possible in most cases to retain one's health and vigor. "How can we do that?" do you ask. Let me quote a few directions from the *Journal and Messenger*:

"Don't worry. Don't hurry. 'Too swift arrived as tardy as too slow.' 'Simplify! simplify! simplify your diet! Don't overeat. Don't starve.' 'Let your moderation be known unto all men.' Court the fresh air day and night. 'Oh, if you knew what was in the air!' Sleep and rest abundantly. Spend less nervous energy

each day than you make. Be cheerful. 'A light heart lives long.' Think only healthful thoughts. 'As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.' 'Seek peace, and pursue it.' 'Work like a man, but don't be worked to death. Avoid passion and excitement; a moment's anger may be fatal.' Associate with healthy people; health is contagious as well as disease. 'Don't carry the whole world on your shoulders, far less the universe; trust the Eternal.' Never despair; 'Lost hope is a fatal disease.' 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' "

These suggestions are surely within the compass of everyone to carry out. It seems to me that little needs to be added to these rules for daily simple living, to secure physical vigor that will endure the long years through. Do we not see examples of the very carrying out of these principles of conduct? Have you ever noticed a healthy, happy old man or woman who was not placid, even-tempered, self-controlled, moderate in habits and contented in disposition? A good example to copy, surely.

USEFULNESS OF THE OLD

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NO age is without its temptations, which would draw one off from making the most of one's opportunities. The youth is disposed to impulsiveness and rashness, and perhaps also sometimes (though not so likely nowadays) to think that he cannot accomplish much; that the world's work is for older men. The middle-aged is disposed to be engrossed so deeply in the affairs of business that he forgets to cultivate the graces of life. While the aged person is in danger of yielding to one great temptation—to think that his days of usefulness are past.

It is to the latter class that these lines are especially addressed, though there may chance to be something in them that may stimulate a thought in the minds of the younger.

It is a great mistake for the old to feel that they are in the way, and would be better out of the world.

If the Lord thought so, doubtless He would find some way to remove them when their usefulness had ceased.

What makes anyone useful? Surely it is not strength and vigor to labor. Else a baby would be a most useless creature; but who will say it is? Does it not twine its little individuality around the hearts of all in the family, and by the cords of common love bind together the members of the household, often causing the father to "straighten up," perhaps uniting the once estranged husband and wife, and bringing brightness and peace into a home cursed by strife and variance?

Usefulness is not dependent upon health. Else there would be many an invalid who would be cumbering the earth, but who now is a blessing to it by calm patience and quiet ministrations to those around. The strong and well could not have access to the heart perhaps as surely as those who are in some sense dependent on account of less abundant vigor.

In these days, when so much is said, and well said, of the value of the young men and the young women

to society, it is well to recognize the value of the old men and women in steadying society, in giving opportunity to younger persons to cultivate the graces of respect, gentleness and consideration, and in affording the rich results of the accumulated wisdom of experience.

Then, too, the aged themselves have a right to feel that they are in that period of life when its richest fruit may be plucked by them. The autumnal days of harvest afford opportunity for gathering the mature thoughts and safest judgments as to the characters and actions of people, the wisest deductions from experience as to the really great things of life, the things most worth while and most deserving of attention and effort. And the aged can give the benefit of these experiences and thoughts to those who are less advanced in years, less matured in judgment. This affords delight to the giver and wise counsel to the recipient.

No, the old are not in the way on account of their age; many a so-called middle-aged man and woman,

even here and there a young one, too, is more in the way, more of a "fossil," than the average old person. Let not the old think they are useless, or the young make them feel so. "All are needed by each one."

A GOOD RULE

A GOOD RULE

THERE is so much in almost anyone's experience that is pleasant and ought to make one happy, that it would seem very hard to find one's self in any position where the bright spots do not far outnumber the dark ones. In other words, "there is nothing so bad that it might not be worse," and in every situation there is more to be thankful for than to grieve over, if we only look in the right direction and see what benefits encompass our pathway. The following lines by D. L. Johnson, handed to me the other day, put this thought into suitable form, so I gladly quote them:

You live and have your daily bread.

Just be thankful.

Great blessings fall upon your head.

Just be thankful.

God smiles upon you day by day,

He guards you whereso'er you stray,

He loves to listen when you pray.

Just be thankful.

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If things ain't cooked the way you wish,
Just be thankful.
Don't growl, and say you'll break the dish.
Just be thankful.
This life, you know, is more than meat;
Be glad for what you have to eat;
Don't scold, but keep your temper sweet.
Just be thankful.
When business gets a little slack,
Just be thankful.
When things seem running off the track,
Just be thankful.
It won't help things to mope and cry;
No strength's extracted from a sigh;
Keep your eye clear, your courage high.
Just be thankful.
When sorrow breaks your peace of mind,
Just be thankful.
Remember God is good and kind.
Just be thankful.
He'll fill your mind with sweetest peace,
Your happiness He will increase,
His love for you shall never cease.
Just be thankful.
God still holds all things in His hands.
Just be thankful.

His word as firm as ever stands.

Just be thankful.

He watches o'er His people still,

Their mouths with good things He doth fill;

Forsake His own He never will.

Just be thankful.

There is good philosophy here, and if we can adopt it as our rule of conduct we shall find life's wheels run more smoothly by far than if we go about fretting and fuming over everything that goes wrong. Life is too short to waste it thus, and as the saying goes, "It will be all the same a hundred years hence"; yes, one year hence (or one day hence, as I read a few days ago), most of the things that trouble us will be "all the same" as if they had been just to our liking. So why not just cast care and worry to the winds, and face the happenings of every day with an unruffled brow, looking rather at the comforts we enjoy and the good things that fill our days, than at the rough stones and the sharp thorns that occasionally thrust themselves before us in our pathway, and "just be thankful"?

POWER OF SONG

POWER OF SONG

THE cheerful spirit will cause its owner to do things that will and must brighten the day for others whom he is unaware of helping. The *Youth's Companion* tells of a striking instance of this that happened in San Francisco.

Thirty men, red-eyed and disheveled, were standing in line before the Judge in the Police Court—the regular morning squad of drunks and disorderlies up for sentence. Some of the men were old in years and in crime, others hung their heads in shame because it was their first appearance there. As the prisoners were about to be dealt with, one by one, by the Judge, a strange thing happened. There came up from below the strains of a song, sung by a strong, clear voice:

Last night I lay a-sleeping,
There came a dream so fair.

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Last night! What a shock! It had been for most of them a time of carousal, a drunken stupor or a nightmare. But they heard the song go on:

I stood in Old Jerusalem,
 Beside the temple there.

The Judge had delayed to open the court. He made inquiry, and found that a former member of a famous opera company, who was known all over the country, was in the jail below, awaiting trial for forgery.

The song went on. Every man in the line manifested emotion. One or two dropped on their knees. A boy at the end leaned his head against the wall, and after trying vainly to keep control of himself burst into sobs and tears, crying out: "Oh, mother! mother!"

His sobs went to the heart even of the hardest of the men. But one began to protest. "Judge," said he, "how long have we got to stand this? We're up here for sentence, but this——" He, too, broke down.

The Judge could not proceed with the business of

the court, yet he gave no order to stop the singing of the beautiful song. It went on to its grand climax:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Sing, for the night is o'er;
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna for evermore!

In the silence that succeeded the ecstasy of melody the Judge looked into the faces of the men before him. Not one but showed that he was deeply touched, that his better impulses had been stirred. There was no individual calling of cases that morning. Instead, the Judge gave the men, all together, a kindly word of advice and dismissed them. The song had accomplished more than punishment would have done.

That forger probably had little thought that anyone would notice his singing, perhaps he cared still less. He sang, no doubt, to cheer his own loneliness, perhaps to take his thoughts off the trouble into which he had brought himself by his crime. But what a power song possesses, when even in such circumstances it could have such a subduing and melting effect.

How much easier it is to work briskly when whistling a merry tune. How our steps and our every movement will keep pace to an inspiring song. But deeper than this lies the emotional, if one might so call it, the spiritual effect—the toning of one's spirits, the raising of the drooping head, the invigorating of the flagging activity, when a noble song bursts upon the ear, or when a gentle, soothing refrain steals into the consciousness. Religion has stirred all the best that is within human nature by song. Well is music called the “divine art,” since it appeals to that which is divine in us. All the noblest and most hopeful and most practically helpful of the various creeds to which man subscribes, have their hymns. From the earliest ages it has been thus. Helpfulness to self and to others, then, indorses the exhortation, “Sing on!”

FILLING ONE'S NICHE

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THERE is a poem written by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, entitled "Why and Wherefore," which sets forth a wise plan of action, whether we feel that we know much of our origin and destiny or not. Apart from such subjects as perplex and confuse, there are plenty of things to engage our attention profitably, and on these it will pay us to ponder. The gifted authoress thus writes:

I know not whence I came,
I know not whither I go,
But the fact stands clear
That I am here
In this world of pleasure and woe,
And out of the mist and murk
Another truth shines plain—
It is in my power,
Each day and hour,
To add to its joy or its pain.
I know that the earth exists;
It is none of my business why.
I cannot find out
What it's all about—
I would but waste time to try.

My life is a brief, brief thing ;
I am here for a little space,
And while I stay
I would like, if I may,
To brighten and better the place.

The trouble, I think, with us all
Is the lack of a high conceit ;
If each man thought
He was sent to the spot
To make it a bit more sweet,
How soon we could gladden the world,
How easily right all wrong,
If nobody shirked,
And each one worked
To help his fellows along.

Cease wondering why you came,
Stop looking for faults and flaws ;
Rise up to-day,
In your pride, and say :
"I am part of the first great cause.
However full the world,
There is room for an earnest man ;
It had need of me,
Or I would not be—
I am here to strengthen the plan."

If we realize that we should not be in this world unless there were room and a function for each one of us, we must recognize that it is our duty, as it is also our high privilege, "to strengthen the plan."

How can we puny creatures of a day strengthen the plan that concerns the world of ages? Well, "if nobody shirked and each one worked" in his own little corner, don't you suppose there would be a great difference in the world? And if so, then to the proportionate degree will the world be helped and brightened if you, as an individual, do what you can; and if I do what I can, that will be a little more; and so on. You are not responsible for doing my share as well as your own, nor am I to be held accountable for what you could do, besides what I can; but each of us must answer for what we, as individuals, can and may do.

There is danger of our having too high a conceit, to be sure, of ourselves and our achievements; but there is also danger, as Mrs. Wilcox says, of "the lack of a high conceit." There is danger lest we forget our

power as individuals, and therefore our responsibility and duty.

Our sphere is wherever we happen to be for the time being. Our mission is to make that spot "a bit more sweet," and this perhaps ought to be our chief worldly duty and concern. If along with the daily discharge of this duty and privilege we may speculate upon our origin, our destiny and our essential nature, so much the better; it will help us to high aims if we raise our eyes to high destiny, and realize the essence of divine grandeur that lies in human life and character. But it is well if we remember the possibilities and opportunities of helpfulness and cheer that lie about our feet—if we "do the next thing."

DON'T SEE THE BLOTS

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DON'T SEE THE BLOTS

A PRETTY and pathetic story is told, with suitable application, by a Nashville paper, to the following effect: A father, on coming home one evening, tired and somewhat dispirited, was approached by his little daughter with her copy-book, which she had just finished writing. It being her first, her young face was reddened with a beautiful and honest flush, as she was sure of receiving some word of praise and cheer for her hard attempt. The pages were indeed neatly written, and her father told her how well pleased he was to see how careful she had been. Presently coming to one page which had two small blots, the little girl laid her little hand upon them, and artlessly looking up into her father's face, said: "Papa, don't see the blots!" Of course, he did not, but bent down and planted a kiss on the little forehead, and felt thankful for the lesson he had learned. He thus expressed his reflections:

“How precious it would be if, amid all the nameless strifes and discords which so fret and chafe us, we would just lay the finger on the sullied page of human lives and not ‘see the blots.’ When littlenesses and meannesses and petty oppositions annoy and vex us, if we could only look away from these to some brighter pages!”

In our own case, we are thankful and relieved when someone whose right it is to inspect our work kindly overlooks the blots. So in our dealings with others we should remember what has caused us to be glad, and turn away our eyes from those little imperfections that have come into the best-intentioned work. How much happier the day is when that is the guiding and governing principle in our relations with our fellow men. So our aim to give and get happiness may be the nearer attained by the judicious looking away from the blots.

In fact, the disposition to look at the blots is one which is sure to spoil life for ourselves and for others.

Paying much attention to what is defective, one comes to see little else, as it is said of those men whose business it is to examine the coins as they are struck off in the mint, to detect flaws—they come to be able to see imperfections where no one else could perceive them. So the fault-finder fails to get pleasure from anything because he sees the blots.

But human nature is bound to be faulty and imperfect. The motive may be the purest, the intention all right and good, but the act, nevertheless, may have some aspect that another person, looking on, may find fault with and condemn. A charitableness in judgment is always wise; it is well to study one's self before pronouncing adversely on any fellow being, for fear that the surface appearance may not truly express the real significance of the action. There will be some blots here and there on the otherwise fair copy-book of life. It is the part of a kind and wise spirit to pass the hand over the blots and see rather what is worthy of commendation.

FOLLY OF FRETTING

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AN Eastern exchange tells a story of how a housekeeper had been able to overcome the habit of fretting over little accidents and worries. Perhaps more real evil comes from worrying over small troubles than befalls one in the way of great disasters. It is helpful, therefore, to strive to impress upon ourselves the folly and wrong of fret by recalling the example of those who have actually conquered it.

While the woman in question was talking with a visitor, the young servant appeared with a broken dish, and a tearful explanation that it "slipped right out of her hands." The lady had heard the crash, but had sat unmoved, and continued conversing quietly with her friend, much to the amazement of the latter, who expected to see her run out to the kitchen to find out what was the matter. Nor did she chide the girl, but rather sought to comfort her. To the friend's won-

dering questions she explained the course of training by which she had learned not to worry over things she couldn't help. The piece was the largest of a fine dinner set given her by her dear old Aunt Rachael, and she did not expect to match it, nor could she afford to buy a new set of dishes every day; and it was that same aunt who had, when she was much younger, and was very much given to fretting over small annoyances, cured her by a vigorous administration of the good old advice that we may all hear or read any day of our life.

“Don't fret; it is thankless, rebellious, and utterly useless; never does a bit of good, and always does harm.” She had heard this counsel, but had not acted on it. Shortly after marriage, having got past the time when almost all young people are usually happy and pleased over everything, her habit of worrying over trifles began to blot here and there the home life, and any petty mishap caused her deep trouble. But when real trouble at last came, in the serious sickness of their

baby, followed, as soon as the little one recovered, by a long illness of her own, she began to put into practice the good resolution formed when in the deep valley of trouble, that she would not again allow herself to be moved by small troubles. The sight of the parlor carpet moth-eaten at the edges, as it had become during her illness, broke down her resolution, but in the midst of it came her old aunt. With her quiet, peaceful words she brought back the younger woman to a state of calm, and to the remark that the knowledge that those bad places were there, even if they did not show much, would take away her peace of mind, the old lady replied: "Thy peace of mind is worth little to thee or to anyone else if it can be so easily broken. Ruth Morrison, thee is starting out in life; beware that thy disposition to fret about small things does not prove a curse. Every thought of discontent about matters beyond thy control is not only a sin against God, but a sin against thy own soul." And she reminded her that every fretful thought wasted on small accidents is only so much added

to their burden. It only made the matter worse to vex her soul over a mishap.

Life's burdens are surely heavy enough without any addition of worry. If we persistently refrain from fretting over small things, we have all the more strength of patience and fortitude to bear the really great troubles. If we do not let little things disturb our equanimity, we shall be the less moved by the real misfortunes.

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